

VA Texas Valley Coastal Bend Health Care System



Patient Information Handbook

VA Texas Valley Coastal Bend Health Care System

Message from the Director

I would like to welcome you to the VA Texas Valley Coastal Bend Health Care System (VCB). The VCB is comprised of outpatient clinics in Corpus Christi, Harlingen, Laredo, McAllen and the VA Health Care Center located in Harlingen, Texas.

Our employees are dedicated to working toward one purpose – providing you the best Veteran centered health care possible. We thank you for your service to our country and appreciate you allowing us the opportunity to serve you.

We hope that this “Patient Information Handbook” will answer most of the questions you may have and help you feel more comfortable with the services provided by the VCB. We encourage your comments and suggestions on how we can improve the care we provide to you. Your input will help us to continue to meet our goal of providing quality health care second to none.



Sincerely,

Mr. Robert M. Walton,
Director

Mission

The mission of the VA Texas Valley Coastal Bend Health Care System (VCB) is to improve the health and quality of life of our patients providing appropriate, compassionate and quality care, to conduct education and research activities, and to support the Department of Defense.

Vision

The vision of the VCB is to be the health system of choice for all Veterans and all other eligible beneficiaries and to be recognized as a center of excellence and an employer of choice.

Values

The care values of the VCB are:

- **Integrity and Trust**
- **Commitment**
- **Advocacy**
- **Respect**
- **Excellence**



Table of Contents

Page		Page	
2	Message from the Director	18	Home Health Care
3	Mission, Vision, Values	18	Home Based Primary Care (HBPC)
4	Table of Contents	19	Nursing Home Care
5	VCB Outpatient Clinics	19	VA Telehealth
8	VCB Specialty Clinics	19	Rural Mobile Medical Unit (MMU)
9	Frequently Called Numbers	20	Medical and Specialty Care Services
10	Keeping the Promise	21	Social Work Services
11	Patient Rights & Responsibilities	21	Advanced Directives
11	Respect and Nondiscrimination	21	Living Will
12	Information Disclosure & Confidentiality	22	Mental Health Services
12	Participation in Treatment Decisions	23	Veteran Crisis Line
13	Concerns or Complaints	23	Homeless Resources
14	Returning Combat Veterans	24	Nutrition Service
14	Women Veterans Program	24	Pain Management
14	Ethics	25	Dental Service
14	Primary Care (PACT)	25	Pharmacy
14	Appointment Information	26	Laboratory
16	Tele-care Services	26	Infection Control
17	Parking	27	Healthy Living
17	Parking Lot Assistance	27	Be Involved in your Health Care
18	Extended Care Services	27	Be Tobacco Free

Page

28	Eat Wisely
29	Be Physically Active
29	Strive for a Healthy Weight
30	Limit Alcohol
31	Get Recommended Screenings Tests and Immunizations
32	Manage Stress
32	Be Safe
32	Prevent Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)
33	Prevent Falls
33	Prevent Motor Vehicle Crashes and Injury
34	Patient Health Education
34	Diabetes Education
34	MOVE! Program
35	My Health eVet
35	Organ Donation
35	Voluntary Services
36	Police Services
36	Prohibited Items
37	Website link

Corpus Christi VA Outpatient Clinic (CCOPC)



5283 Old Brownsville Rd.
Corpus Christi, TX 78405
Phone: **(361) 806 5600**

Harlingen VA Outpatient Clinic (HOPC)



2106 Treasure Hills Blvd.
Harlingen, TX 78550
Phone: **(956) 366 4500**
Toll free: **(866) 877 4672**

Laredo VA Outpatient Clinic (LOPC)



4602 N. Bartlett Ave
Laredo, TX, 78041
Phone: **(956) 523 7850**

McAllen VA Outpatient Clinic (MCOPC)



901 E. Hackberry Ave.
McAllen, TX, 78503
Phone: **(956) 618-7100**

VA Health Care Center (HCC) At Harlingen

Ambulatory Surgery & Specialty Clinics



2601 Veterans Drive
Harlingen, Texas 78550
Phone: **(956) 291-9000**

VA Corpus Christi Specialty Clinic



205 S. Enterprize Parkway
Corpus Christi, Texas 78405
Phone: **(361) 939-6510**

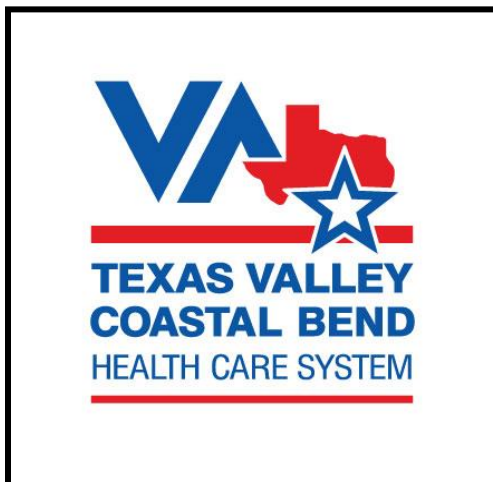
Frequently Called Numbers

Tele-care Nurse	(888) 686-6350	Weekends, after hours & holidays
Corpus Christi VA Outpatient Clinic	(361) 806-5600	M- F 8:00am-4:30pm
Corpus Christi VA Specialty Outpatient Clinic	(611) 939-6510	M-F 8:00am-4:30pm
Harlingen VA Outpatient Clinic	(956) 366-4500	M-F 8:00am-4:30pm
VA Health Care Center at Harlingen	(956) 291-9000	M-F 7:30am-4:30pm
Laredo VA Outpatient Clinic	(956) 523-7850	M-F 8:00am-4:30pm
McAllen VA Outpatient Clinic	(956) 618-7100	M-F 8:00am-4:30pm
Automated Telephone Medication Refills	1-877-752-0650	24-hour refill service
Billing/Insurance Information	(866) 393-9132	M-F 8:00am-4:30pm
Enrollment	(956) 291-9046	M-F 8:00am-4:30pm
Non-VA Care/Choice Program	(956) 291- 9024 (956) 291-9068	M-F 8:00am-4:30pm
Patient Advocates		
Corpus Christi/Laredo	(361) 806-5600	M-F 8:00am-4:30pm
McAllen/Laredo	(956) 618-7100 ext. 67365	
Harlingen	(956) 366-4510	
Home and Community Based Primary Care Program	(956) 291-9058	M-F 8:00am-4:30pm
Voluntary Service	(956) 291-9093	M-F 8:00am-4:30pm
Women Veterans Program	956-430-9344	M-F 8:00am-4:30pm

“KEEPING THE PROMISE”

*“to care for him who shall have borne the
battle, for his widow and for his orphan...”*

-Abraham Lincoln-



Veterans Health Administration (VHA) is pleased you have selected us to provide your healthcare. We want to improve the health and well-being of our Veterans. We will make your visit as pleasant as possible.

As part of our service, we are committed to improving healthcare quality for Veterans. VHA trains future healthcare professionals, conducts research, and supports our country in times of national emergency. In all of these activities, our employees respect and support your rights as a patient.

Patient Rights and Responsibilities

You have the right to contact the Joint Commission's Office with any concerns regarding the quality of care you are receiving by calling 1-800-977-6610 or by accessing the Joint Commission's web at **www.jointcommission.org** or emailing

complaint@jointcommission.org. You may also have a surveyor from the Joint Commission's office contact you when they make unannounced visits to the health care facility's site.

Respect and Nondiscrimination

- You have the right to be free from mental, physical, sexual, and verbal abuse, neglect and exploitation.
- You will be treated with dignity, compassion and respect as an individual.
- Your privacy will be protected.
- We will seek to honor your personal and religious values and beliefs.
- You or someone you choose have the right to keep and spend your own money. You have the right to receive an accounting of VA held funds.
- Treatment will respect your personal freedoms. In rare cases, the use of medication and physical restraints may be used if all other efforts to keep you or others free from harm have not worked.
- You will receive care in a safe environment.

In order to provide safe treatment environment for all patients and staff, you are asked to respect other patients and staff and to follow the facilities rules.

Avoid unsafe acts that place others at risk for accidents or injuries. Report any unsafe conditions.

Information Disclosure and Confidentiality

- You will be given information about the health benefits that you can receive.
- The information will be provided in a way you can understand.
- You will receive information about the costs of your care before you are treated. You are responsible for paying for your portion of the costs associated with your care.
- Your medical record will be kept confidential. Information about you will not be released without your consent unless authorized by law (i.e. State public health reporting).
- You have the right to information in your medical record and may request a copy of your records. This will be provided except in rare situations where your VA physician feels the information will be harmful to you.
- You will be informed of all outcomes of care, including any

injuries caused by your medical care.

- You will be informed about how to request compensation for injuries.
- Informed consent is obtained.
- Consent is obtained for recording or filming made for purposes other than the identification, diagnosis, or treatment of the patients.

Participation in Treatment Decisions



- You and any persons you choose will be involved in all decisions about your care.
- You will be given information you can understand about the benefits and risks of treatment. You will be given other options.
- You can agree to or refuse treatment. Refusing treatment will not affect rights to future care but you have the responsibility to understand the possible results to your health. If you believe you

cannot follow the treatment plan you have a responsibility to notify the treatment team.

- Tell your provider about your current condition, history, and medicines, including over the counter medications and herbal supplements. Share any other information that affects your health. Ask questions when you don't understand something about your care. This will help provide the best care possible.
- You have the right to have your pain assessed and to receive treatment to manage your pain. You and your treatment team will develop a pain management plan together. You are expected to help the treatment team by telling them if you have pain and if the treatment is working.
- You have the right to choose whether or not you will participate in any research project. Any research will be clearly identified. Potential risks of the research will be identified and there will be no pressure on you to participate.
- You will be included in resolving any ethical issues about your care. You

may talk to your provider or with your nurse about any health care ethical concerns you may have.

If you believe that you have been neglected, abused, or exploited, you will receive help.

Concerns or Complaints

- Contact your treatment team and/or patient advocate if you have problems or complaints. You will be given information you can understand about the complaint process. You may complain verbally or in writing, without fear of retaliation.
- You have a right to access protective and advocacy services. Contact Social Services can help.

If you are concerned that your privacy rights have been violated, you may file a complaint to VHA or to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

To file a complaint, contact

VA Facility Privacy Officer

956-430-9353

or VHA via <http://www.va.gov>

or dial **1-877-222-8387**

You will not be penalized for filing a complaint

Returning Combat Veterans

VCB is grateful to the men and women who have risked their lives to fight terrorism in Afghanistan, Iraq, and many other places around the world. If you have served in Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), Operation New Dawn (OND) please contact



Lucia Leo-Diaz

956-618-7100 Ext 67274

**OEF/OIF/OND Program
Manager**

Women Veterans Program



VCB has a Women Veterans Program Manager. At each

outpatient clinic, there is a representative for the Women Veterans Health Program. Women are a fast growing group within the Veteran population today, and this program ensures that the best care is provided to our women Veterans. Staff can provide you with information and assist with

arrangements for Pap smears, mammograms and other women's health examinations, or for counseling related to mental health or sexual trauma. For any questions about this program contact

Kathleen Libke

956-430-9344

**Women Veterans Program
Manager**

Ethics

VCB supports your values and beliefs. If you are having a difficult time making decisions about your health, you can request an Ethics Consult.

You can get help with end of life decisions, pain management, treatment options, and many other issues.

Ethics consultants work with patients, families, and staff to help them make good decisions to resolve these concerns.

Contact

Gloria Turner

956-523-7850 Ext.63229

Ethics Consultation Coordinator

Primary Care



Patient Aligned Care Teams (PACT) provide Primary Care in the VA. Your PACT is made of several members of the Health Care Team which take care of your health care needs.

PACT Members

Provider: Doctor, nurse practitioner (NP), or physician Assistant (PA)

Registered Nurse (RN)

Licensed Vocational Nurse (LVN)

Medal Support Assistant (Clerk)

These PACT members assist you to coordinate your care and set goals for your health.

Sometimes you need a specialist for complex problems or you may need additional services. Your PACT will arrange appointments and continue to oversee your care.

Routine Calls:

Routine questions, problems or concerns that are not emergencies will be answered by your PACT or through My HealtheVet.

Expect return contact within the next 48-72 hours.

Urgent Calls:

“Urgent” means you have a question about your care (such as a change in condition or question about medication) that needs to be answered within the next 24 hours. Call your PACT.

Emergency Calls

If you have a life threatening emergency, such as a heart attack, sudden facial or extremity weakness (stroke), bleeding that will not stop or severe abdominal pain.

This is an emergency.

DIAL 911 immediately.



Clinic Appointments:

“Don’t Be a No-Show”

Clinic appointments are prescheduled visits. You should make every effort to keep your scheduled appointment.

If you need to re-schedule your appointment, contact the clinic clerk.

You can request a cancellation and get another appointment.

Check in for your appointments 15 to 30 minutes before the scheduled time.

Every effort will be made to see all patients at their scheduled times.

Don’t “walk-in” to the clinic without an appointment.

If you have an emergency, go the nearest emergency room. If you feel that you need to be seen before your scheduled appointment, call your PACT.

Tele-care Services

The VA Texas Valley Coastal Bend has 24 hour telephone advice services for



Veterans. The Telecare program is staffed by bilingual Registered Nurses

(RNs) and Administrative staff. Call the Tele-Care Nurse if you have symptoms, questions, or need advice about a health problem. Give the nurse the following important information:

- Your full name;
- Your social security number;
- Your current address;
- Phone numbers and area code
- where you can be reached;
- Your reason for calling the Tele-Care nurse.

Call Toll Free:

1-888-686-6350

Tele-care staff can:

- Assist you and your family members with questions and concerns about your health.
- Advise the proper course of treatment based on your symptoms using VA-approved clinical/health care guidelines
- Provide education regarding healthy living, diseases, and medications.
- Clarify procedure treatment instructions.
- Explain hospitalization discharge instructions.

- Provide you with other community or VA sources of information.
- Submit primary care consults.

Tele-care staff cannot:

- Give lab, x-ray or other special test results. Your primary care provider will give you that information.
- Schedule or cancel routine appointments.
- Transfer calls to other clinic departments.
- Provide authorization for payment of services provided by non-VA facilities.

Parking at the Clinics

Parking lots are located near the

- Corpus Christi Outpatient (CCOPC)
- Harlingen Outpatient Clinic (HOPC)
- Laredo Outpatient Clinic (LOPC)
- McAllen Outpatient Clinic (MOPC)
- Corpus Christi Specialty Clinic (CCSC)

The parking garage is located south of

- Harlingen Care Center (HCC)

Patient parking is on the ground and 2nd floor. You can access the HCC by walking under the breezeway on the ground floor to the lobby. The parking garage has 2 elevators and 3 stairwells. If you experience an emergency while in the parking garage, you can use the emergency phones on each floor to directly contact VA police.

Parking Lot Assistance

If you need help getting out of your vehicle, please call these numbers.

- Corpus Christi Outpatient (CCOPC) **361-806-5645**
- Harlingen Outpatient Clinic (HOPC) **956-366-4504**
- Laredo Outpatient Clinic (LOPC) **956-523-7867**
- McAllen Outpatient Clinic (MOPC) **956-992-9887**
- Harlingen Care Center (HCC) **956-291-9001**
- Corpus Christi Specialty Clinic (CCSC) **361-939-6575**

Extended Care Services

The VA provides many services to help Veterans in the community. Your PACT may refer you to one of the following programs.

Home Health Care

If you need skilled care in the home, the doctor may write an order for the VA to arrange home health care. This is usually needed when you have a wound that you need to learn to take care of, need to be educated about a new disease or have a health problem than needs to be monitored. Medicare provides the best home care benefits for most Veterans. If you don't have Medicare benefits, the VA may be able to provide services through other funding.

Home Based Primary Care Program (HBPC)

HBPC provides primary care in the home with family and community support. PACT members include a doctor or nurse practitioner, nurse, social worker, dietician, physical or

occupational therapist, pharmacist, psychologist, and clerk.

You are eligible if:

- You are eligible for VA Healthcare
- You live within 60 miles of Harlingen, Texas
- You and/or your caregiver accept HBPC program as your principal primary care provider. (PACT)
- Your home environment is safe for you, your caregiver, and the HBPC team members.
- You have a complex disease process, which requires care by a team
- You are unable to obtain care in a regular clinic setting

You can be referred to HBPC while you are in the hospital or visiting your PACT. Your primary care provider or any other health care provider may refer you to the HBPC program. You will be evaluated in your home by an HBPC team member.

Nursing Home Care

Veterans who need full time care by trained staff can be referred to a community nursing home.



VA Telehealth

The VA wants you to have care even when you live long distances from the nearest clinic or specialist. Telehealth is offered in 3 ways.

Home TeleHealth (HT) allows you to monitor some conditions at home through special equipment. Medical staff will train and provide you with blood pressure, blood sugar, and weight monitoring equipment. You and your team will work together to maintain your health. You will continue to see your PACT for primary care.

Clinical Video TeleHealth (CVT) allows you and your provider to see and talk to each other through a video conferencing

monitor. CVT can be used in Primary care, Specialty Care, and Mental Health.

Store and Forward TeleHealth (SFT) allows x-ray, pictures and other clinical information to be taken and then transmitted over distances. Your provider will use this information to help in your treatment plan.

Rural Mobile Medical Unit

The Mobile Medical Unit (MMU) visits six rural South Texas communities on alternating weeks.

Week 1

- Falfurrias
VFW Post 7654
East HWY 285
- Zapata
American Legion Post 486
2203 N US HWY 83
- Rio Grande City
VFW Post 8526
5127 East HWY 83

Week 2

- Hebbronville
Jim Hogg County Courthouse
102 East Tilley
- Roma
VFW Post 9175
17 Flores Street

- Port Isabel
American Legion Post 496
819 South Garcia Street

If you are a VA Texas Valley Coastal Bend enrolled Veteran who lives in one of these areas, you can be seen on the MMU. You will get routine primary care, preventive care, and limited mental health services. The MMU is for scheduled appointments only. Call your PACT to make an MMU appointment. The VA Texas Valley Coastal Bend Health Care System has partnered with the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), American Legion Posts, and Counties to use their locations for the MMU.



Medical and Specialty Care Services

Medical and specialty care services are offered at the VA Health Care Center (HCC) at Harlingen and Corpus Christi Specialty Clinic (CCSC). Many Specialists, nurses, technicians and

other trained staff work together to provide care.

Our specialty care line includes:

- General Surgery
- Amputee Clinic
- Ear, Nose, and Throat
- Eye care
 - Optometry
 - Ophthalmology
 - Optical Shop
- Orthopedics and Rheumatology (bones and joints)
- Cardiology
 - Echocardiography
 - Exercise Stress Testing
 - Holter monitoring
 - Pacemaker clinic
- Gastroenterology (digestion)
- Dermatology (Skin)
- Infectious Disease
- Oncology (Cancer)
- Prosthetics
- Physical Medicine and Rehab
- Neurology (brain and nerves)
- Pulmonary (lungs)
 - Bronchoscopy
 - Pulmonary Function Testing
 - Sleep Clinic

Social Work Services

At the VA Texas Valley Coastal Bend Health Care System, Social Workers are an important part of your team. Social workers help Veterans find resources to meet their needs in the VA system and in the community.

In the mental health setting, Social Workers assist in:

- Mental health assessments and treatments
- Case management for Veterans involved in the criminal justice system
- Intensive case management for Veterans suffering from chronic mental illness
- Substance abuse counseling
- Suicide prevention services

In the medical and community setting, Social Workers assist in:

- Veteran eligibility and placement in community nursing homes
- Home assessments
- Hospice services
- Specialized Operation Enduring Freedom(OEF), Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), Operation New Dawn (OND) services

- Basic needs, transportation, finances, and legal concerns
- [Advance directives, durable powers of attorney](#)

Advance Directives

An advance directive is a legal form which allows medical staff and family make decisions about your medical care, if you are too ill to understand your choices.

An Advance Directive is completed when you can make decisions.

Living Will

A Living Will is a legal form which states the types of treatment you would or would not want if you cannot decide for yourself.

It is important for you to talk with your family or significant other about health care treatments you want in case you cannot make decisions for yourself.

You have the right to accept or refuse medical treatment, the right to assign a health care agent, and you have the right to have your treatment preferences documented.

Mental Health Services

The Mental Health Service program at the VA Texas Valley Coastal Bend Health Care System (VCB) provides consultation, evaluation, and treatment for a variety of issues that can impact health and emotional well-being. The services are available to eligible Veterans, their families and caregivers.

Mental health treats

- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- Post Deployment Re-Adjustment
- Drug and Alcohol Abuse or Dependence
- Depression
- Thoughts About Suicide
- Military Sexual Trauma
- Grief
- Anxiety, Worry
- Insomnia
- Relationship Problems
- Addictive Behaviors, Smoking Cessation
- Stress or Lifestyle Modifications
- Pain Management
- Anger Management
- Aggressive or Self-Harming Behaviors
- Memory Impairment

We also provide outreach to homeless and justice-involved Veterans.

Contact Mental Health

Outpatient services are available in our clinics 5 days a week from 8am through 4:30pm. The Mental Health Department at each clinic can be contacted by calling the clinic directly.

- Corpus Christi Specialty Clinic (CCSC) **361-939-6510**
- Harlingen Outpatient Clinic (HOPC) **956-366-4526**
- Harlingen Care Center (HCC) **956-291-9129**
- Laredo Outpatient Clinic (LOPC) **956-523-7850**
- McAllen Outpatient Clinic (MOPC) **956-618-7100 ext. 67300**

Mental health services are confidential. We will not talk to anyone about information you share unless you give written consent. Under federal law, a few exceptions to this rule exist.

For emergencies, call 911.

Veteran Crisis Line

The Veterans Crisis Line connects Veterans in crisis and their families and friends with VA responders through a confidential toll-free hotline and online chat. Veterans and their loved ones can call **1-800-273-8255** and **Press 1** or [chat online](#) to receive confidential support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and 365 days a year.

When emotional issues reach a crisis point, it's time to call on the Veterans Crisis Line. Look for the warning signs.

- Hopelessness, feeling like there's no way out
- Anxiety, agitation, sleeplessness, or mood swings
- Feeling like there is no reason to live
- Rage or anger
- Engaging in risky activities without thinking
- Increasing alcohol or drug abuse
- Withdrawing from family and friends

The following signs require immediate attention:

- Thinking about hurting or killing yourself
- Looking for ways to kill yourself
- Talking about death, dying, or suicide
- Self-destructive behavior such as drug abuse, weapons, etc.

If you are a Veteran or know a Veteran who is having any of these signs, **call the Veterans Crisis Line immediately.**

1-800-273-8255 PRESS 1

Responders are standing by to help.



Homeless Resources

One homeless Veteran is too many. VA is helping to end Veteran homelessness through programs and services including Prevention, Housing Support, Treatment, Employment and Job Training.

If you are a Veteran who is homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, you can contact the VCB Homeless Coordinators.

Amanda Doemland
361-806-5600 ext. 62236
Corpus Christi

Pedro Bustamante
956-336-4500 ext. 67672
Harlingen

Jennifer Roby
956-523-7850 ext. 63274
Laredo



The [National Call Center for Homeless Veterans](https://www.va.gov/homeless) provides assistance to homeless Veterans and their families. For free, confidential support from a trained, VA staff member 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, call

1-877-4AID VET (1-877-424-3838)

Nutrition Service

The dietitian will be available to talk with your family about meal planning for you. Any friend or relative

who prepares your meals will be invited to listen to the diet instructions. You may request a visit with the dietitian by contacting your PACT.

Pain Management

Pain is different for every person. Your Health Care Team wants to help you manage your pain. Tell your PACT how you are feeling.

- Show your team where you hurt
- Describe your pain
- Tell your provider what makes it worse or better
- Explain how it affects your life
- Rate your pain

0 - no pain - 10 - worst possible pain

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10



Your provider will discuss treatments to help with your pain. So treatments will involve other Team members or services. Work with your Team to be pain free.

Dental Service

The VCB Dental Service provides a full range of dental treatment to **eligible** Veterans. Ask your PACT if you can be referred.



Pharmacy

Pharmacy Service is part of your treatment team. Pharmacists provide medication information to you and your family. They will tell you the best way to take your medicine and what to expect.



Ask your pharmacist these questions to understand our medications.

- Why am on this medication?
- How long should I take it?
- What are the common side effects?
- Is this medicine safe to take with other medications?
- Should I stop eating or drinking certain things while on this medication?

Your pharmacist will explain the directions on the medicine bottles. They

can provide pill cutters, pill boxes, and medicine cups.

Keep a copy of your medication list with you at all times. Give a list of all your medications, including over-the-counter medications and supplements to your PACT.

VCB Outpatient Pharmacy is open from 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM, Monday through Friday.

For Prescription refills use the

Automated Refill Line:

1-877-752-0650

Follow the directions.

You will need:

- Your complete Social Security Number
- The prescription numbers, found on the bottle

Laboratory Hours for Outpatients Clinic

Corpus Christi Specialty Clinic

8:00 a.m. – 4:30p.m. Monday - Friday

Harlingen Outpatient Clinic

8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. Monday – Friday

VA Health Care Center at Harlingen

8:00 a.m. – 4:30p.m. Monday - Friday

McAllen Outpatient Clinic

8:00 a.m. – 4:30p.m. Monday - Friday

Laredo Outpatient Clinic

8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. Monday – Friday

- Hand washing is the most important way to prevent the spread of infection.
- Remind health care givers, family and friends to wash their hands or use hand sanitizer.
- Keep cuts and scrapes covered with a bandage
- Do not touch other people's wounds or bandages



Infection Control

Help VA Texas
Valley Coastal
Bend stop the
spread of
infections.



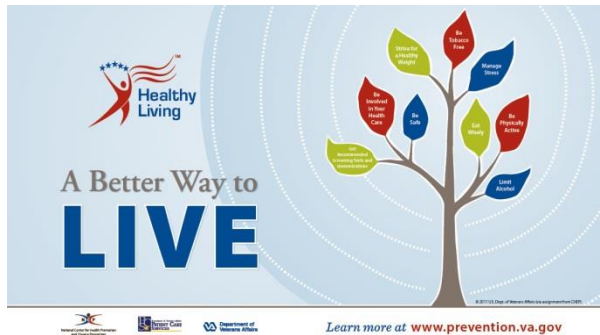
Some infections are difficult to cure.
METHICILLIN-RESISTANT
STAPHYLOCOCCUS AUREUS (MRSA)
is a type of infection that does not
respond to certain antibiotics. MRSA
can look like red, swollen, painful bumps
on the skin. It may drain, spreading the
germs.

Protect yourself and others when you
cough or sneeze.

- Cover your mouth with a tissue
- If you do not have a tissue, use your upper sleeve
- Your Team may ask you to wear a mask to help prevent the spread of germs.



Healthy Living Messages



Be Involved in Your Health Care

You are the center of your care. Your PACT needs complete information about



your health. Explain your health problems, past illness, and hospitalizations.

Partner with your PACT

- Write down questions before your appointment
- Share your beliefs about your health plan
- Tell your PACT about the things that get in the way of your health
- Explain what you prefer to do
- Speak up when you are concerned

Get the most out of your appointments

- Ask for written instructions that you and your family understand
- Know the names of your medications
- Ask when and where you will have treatments
- Ask for your PACT phone number
- Use My HealthVet so contact your PACT when it is not an emergency
- Bring someone you trust to your appointments

Be Tobacco Free

Quitting smoking is the single most



important thing you can do to improve your health and protect the health of your family members. Smoking harms nearly every organ of the body. Using tobacco causes many diseases and affects your overall health. All forms of tobacco are harmful. This includes cigars, pipes, snuff, chewing tobacco and e-cigarettes.

The VA can help you quit. Ask your PACT for help or a referral

- You can get medications and tips for quitting
- You can meet with an expert for individual help
- You can join a class with other Veterans who are also quitting

National and after-hours help

- Tobacco Cessation Quit Line for Veterans: **1-855-QUIT VET (1-855-784-8838)**
- SmokefreeVET: A mobile text message smoking cessation service. **Text the word VET to 47848** from your mobile phone or visit: www.Smokefree.gov/VET
- Stay Quit Coach: a free mobile app to support quitting smoking and staying quit.

Eat Wisely

Each person has different dietary needs. By eating wisely, you can



become healthier.

Eat and drink a variety of foods and beverages selecting from the basic food groups. Choose foods that are: high in fiber (whole-grains); have little added salt or sugars; and are low in fat and cholesterol.

Get the nutrients you need in a healthy way by following a balanced eating plan.

<http://www.choosemyplate.gov/index.html>



- My Plate can help with daily food plans
- What you eat and how much you eat is different for every person.
- Based on your health, age, gender, size, and level of physical activity, your needs can change
- Ask to see a Dietician about eating wisely

Be Physically Active

Less than half of U.S. adults get enough physical activity. Avoid inactivity. Some physical activity



is better than none. Even a small amount of activity can give big health results.

- Regular physical activity helps in depression, diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, obesity, stroke, and some kinds of cancer.
- Physical activity is anything that gets the body moving
- Begin at a level that is comfortable and increase your activity.
- Aim for 2 ½ hours each week of moderate-intensity, or 1¼ hours a week of vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity, or a combination of both.
- Your body is working at a moderate intensity when you can talk but not sing. Moderate-intensity physical activity includes things like walking fast, dancing, and raking leaves.

- Your body is working at a vigorous intensity when you cannot say more than a few words without pausing for a breath. Vigorous-intensity physical activity includes things like jogging, jumping rope, swimming laps, or riding a bike uphill.
- People of all ages and body types benefit from physical activity. Even if you are out of shape or have not been active in a long time, you can begin activity safely.

Strive for a Healthy Weight



Maintaining a healthy weight means balancing the number of calories you eat with the calories your body uses or burns.

VA uses a Body Mass Index (BMI) as a guide to determine your ideal weight.

Underweight = BMI less than 18.5

Normal weight = BMI of 18.5 to 24.9

Overweight = BMI of 25 to 29.9

Obesity = BMI of 30 or greater

Link to BMI table:

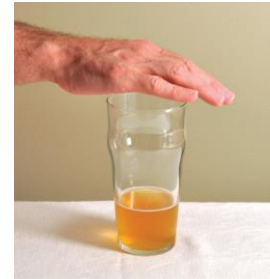
http://www.move.va.gov/download/NewHandouts/Miscellaneous/M06_BMIChart.pdf

Being overweight or obese increases your risk for diabetes, high blood pressure, cholesterol problems, heart disease, gallbladder disease, female health disorders, arthritis, some types of cancer, and sleep apnea.

- Eat wisely and choose a variety of low calorie, nutritious foods and beverages.
- Be physically active. For health benefits, adults should do at least 2 ½ hours a week of moderate-intensity or 1 ¼ hours a week of vigorous intensity aerobic physical activity or an equal combination of both.
- Losing as little as 5-10% of your current body weight can lower your risks for many diseases.
- A reasonable and safe weight loss is 1-2 lbs. per week.
- If you are normal weight, maintain it.

Limit Alcohol

If you choose to drink alcohol, drink in moderation (women no more than 1 drink a day; men no more than 2 drinks a day). Avoid "binge drinking." If you are concerned about your drinking, talk to your VA health care team about getting help.



- One drink is:
 - 12 oz. regular beer OR
 - 8-9 oz. malt liquor OR
 - 5 oz. table wine OR
 - 1.5 oz. 80-proof hard liquor.
- Binge drinking is having:
 - More than 3 drinks on one occasion for women and adults over age 65.
 - More than 4 drinks on one occasion for men.

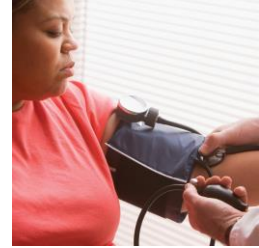
For many adults, drinking small amounts of alcohol does not cause serious health problems. Too much alcohol use or binge drinking can lead to higher risk of health problems, such as liver damage or injuries.

The following people should not drink alcohol at all:

- Children and teenagers
- People of any age who cannot limit their drinking to the recommended levels
- Women who are pregnant or who plan to become pregnant
- People who plan to drive, operate machines, or take part in other activities that require attention, skill, or coordination
- People taking certain medications that interact with alcohol
- People with certain medical conditions
- People recovering from alcohol dependence (alcoholism)

Alcohol dependence can be treated. Effective treatments include individual counseling, group treatments, medications to reduce craving or prevent relapse, and inpatient or residential treatment. Talk to your VA health care team about your alcohol use and any other substance or addiction problems.

Get Recommended Screening Tests and Immunizations



The VA wants to prevent conditions or catch them in the earliest stages. Most Veterans are screened for alcohol abuse, depression, high blood pressure, HIV, military sexual trauma, obesity, PTSD, and tobacco use.

Immunizations for most Veterans

- Flu shot every year
- Tetanus shot once every 10 years
- Other immunizations based on ages, gender, health, and family history

Your PACT will recommend preventive screening tests for you based on your age, gender, health status, and family history.

Manage Stress

If you are having difficulty coping with life's demands, we call this "stress."

A life without some stress would be boring. Most of us like some challenges, but too much stress creates problems.



Signs of stress

- Difficulty concentrating
- Being tired
- Feelings of worry or fear
- Tense muscles
- Sweaty palms
- Pounding or racing heart

Too much stress over a long period of time can put your health at risk.

Be Safe

There are actions you can take to protect yourself and those you



love from harm. Common safety issues are sexually transmitted infections, falls, and motor vehicle crashes.

Prevent Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)

- The best way to fully protect yourself from STIs is to abstain from sex.
- STIs can be passed to another person during sex; Use a latex condom every time you have sex (vaginal, anal, or oral), if your partner might be or is infected.
- Fewer partners decrease your chance of STIs.
- Being in a mutually monogamous relationship with an uninfected partner (you and your partner only have sex with each other) can reduce your risk of developing STIs.
- STIs can also be passed from a pregnant woman to her baby before or during the baby's birth. If you are pregnant, get tested for STIs and seek appropriate treatment if the test is positive to avoid passing the infection to the baby.

Many STIs do not have symptoms. You can have an STI without knowing it. Some STIs can be cured with antibiotics

if they are treated early. Untreated STIs can cause serious health problems, such as infertility. If you are treated for an STI, your sex partner(s) should also be treated to prevent re-infecting you. Talk to your PACT team about your concerns about Sexually Transmitted Infections.

Prevent Falls

Among older adults, falls are the leading cause of injury deaths. They are also the most common cause of nonfatal injuries and hospital admissions for trauma. About half of all falls happen at home. If you or a loved one has fallen recently or has balance problems, consider the following home safety tips.

- Remove small throw rugs or use double-sided tape to keep them from slipping.
- Have grab bars put in next to your toilet and in the tub or shower.
- Improve the lighting in your home. As you get older, you need brighter lights to see well. Hang light-weight curtains or shades to reduce glare.
- Wear shoes both inside and outside the house. Avoid going barefoot or wearing slippers.

- Remove things you can trip over (such as papers, books, clothes, shoes) from stairs and places where you walk.
- Keep items you use often in cabinets you can reach easily without using a step stool.
- Use non-slip mats in the bathtub and on shower floors.
- Have handrails and lights put in all staircases.
- Engaging in regular physical activity, especially strengthening exercises can reduce your risk of falling by increasing strength and balance.

Prevent Motor Vehicle Crashes and Injury

Impaired driving is dangerous and causes more than half of all motor vehicle crashes. Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death in Veterans in the early years after returning from deployment. Don't drive while under the influence of alcohol or drugs or ride with somebody who is.

- You can reduce your chance and your loved ones' chances of dying from a motor vehicle-related injury by correctly using seat belts and car

seats. Wear seat belts in cars and helmets on motorcycles and bicycles.

- Don't text message or talk on a cell phone while driving.
-

Patient Health Education



You have the right to understand your health conditions.

- Tell us what you want to learn.
- Ask us to help you get the care you need.
- Tell us if you need special help with hearing, seeing or understanding.
- Ask us for more information about education classes and support groups

You can get information in many ways.

- Patient Educator at your designated clinic or your PACT RN

- Classes and Support groups for Veterans and families
- Health Education Materials in waiting areas and from your healthcare Team

Diabetes Education

The diabetes education program teaches you how to balance food



with activity, how to check your blood sugar, use a blood glucose meter. You will learn about your medications and how to take and store them. Talk with your PACT Nurses about enrolling in a class or making an individual appointment.



MOVE! PROGRAM

MOVE! Weight Management Program is a national weight management program designed for Veterans. It can help you

lose weight, keep it off and improve your health. MOVE! is offered

- Individually or in classes
- TeleHealth
- Telephone
- MOVE! Coach mobile app for iPhone
- MOVE! Website

www.move.va.gov



Ask your PACT to refer you to MOVE!.



My HealthVet

My HealthVet is an internet site for Veterans and their families. It is the VAs online personal health record.

- Access your health information
- See your appointments
- View some health records and lab results
- Email your PACT through Secure Messaging
- Complete your Health eLiving Assessment (HLA) to find out

your risk for chronic health problems

Visit the website for more information.

www.myhealth.va.gov

Organ Donation

Veterans Health Administration Policy supports the Veteran's right to be an organ donor.



Give thanks. Give life.

For more information contact

- Southwest Transplant Alliance
<http://www.organ.org/>
1-800-788-8058
Corpus Christi
- Organ Sharing Alliance
<http://txorgansharing.org/>
1-800-275-1744
Harlingen, McAllen, and Laredo

Voluntary Services

The VA Texas Valley Coastal Bend Health Care System depends on volunteers. If you would like to serve our Veterans, you can volunteer. Volunteers can perform a number of

services, and your talents are closely matched you're your assignment.

Contact Voluntary Services and fill out an application.

Donations

Voluntary Services accepts donations which are used for the comfort and welfare of our Veterans.

Donation of money assists with

- Refreshments and supplies
- Urgent needs (food, clothing, housing)
- Homelessness, women's, and OEF/OIF/OND programs
- Transportation for rural Veterans
- Recreational activities

Non-cash contributions are also accepted. You can donate magazines, coffee, water, healthy snacks, bus tickets, gas cards, and telephone cards.

To make a cash or non-cash contribution, please contact the Valley Coastal Bend Health Care System Voluntary Service Office at (956) 291-9093.

Police Services



Notify the VA

Police if you are

aware of actual or suspected criminal activity, suspicious activity or an emergency. At all outpatient clinics, the police stations are near the main lobby.

Prohibited items

Certain items are not allowed on VA property.

- Alcoholic beverages
- Narcotics
- Weapons
- Cameras
- Lighter fluid
- Straight-edge razors
- Medicine not prescribed by a health care provider or medicine from home.

If you have a weapon, turn it over to the VA police, while you are in clinic. VA Police Service located in the main lobby, near the entrance of each clinic.

Notice: The VA Texas Valley Coastal Bend Health Care System and all of its programs and facilities in Corpus Christi, Harlingen, Laredo, and McAllen Texas, provide high quality service.

The VA Texas Valley Coastal Bend Health Care System (VATVCBHCS) is accredited by the Joint Commission standards. For more information about VATVCBHCS, please visit our website: www.texasvalley.va.gov



Keeping the Promise!